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SUBJECT: FATA-MAMMADYAROV MEETING - APRIL 16, 2008

REF: BAKU 383

Classified By: Ambassador Anne Derse, Reason 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: In an April 16 meeting with Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for European and NATO Policy Daniel Fata, Foreign Minister Mammadyarov underscored increasing volatility in the region and pressure from Azerbaijan's neighbors, especially in connection with Azerbaijan's commitment to "open Central Asia to the rest of the world" to bolster global energy security. He echoed President Aliyev's support for USG policy on missile defense, and expanded on Aliyev's call for greater security cooperation with the US (reftel), saying that "frankly speaking, we are looking for a security umbrella. Right now, there is not only no umbrella, we are out in the rain." Azerbaijan's strategic goal in the next three to five years is "further integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, period." Azerbaijan desires to move from IPAP II to intensified dialogue, but must "navigate smartly" to secure support for closer cooperation in NATO member capitals, including the US, given "fierce opposition" from Azerbaijan's neighbors and the Armenian diaspora. Confirming the expected visit of Turkmen President Berdimuhamedov to Baku next month, Mammadyarov was confident relations with Turkmenistan are on track and will result in closer cooperation by the end of the year. Seeing a train and equip program (TEP) as an important tool for military transformation, the GOAJ is interested in discussing a possible TEP "without some of the unnecessary conditions" in more detail. END SUMMARY.

¶2. (C) On April 16, after meeting President Aliyev (reftel), DAS/D for European and NATO Policy Daniel Fata, accompanied by the Ambassador Derse, Maj. Gen. Harry M. Wyatt, Brig. Gen. William Mayville, Col. Jon Chicky, Office of the Secretary of Defense Country Director Anne Gebhards, and LTC. Mike Bruce, met with Foreign Minister Mammadyarov.

Strategic Goal: European Integration  
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¶3. (C) Responding to DAS/D Fata's opening query as to where Azerbaijan wants to be, strategically, in three to five years, Mammadyarov answered decisively "further integration into European and Euro-Atlantic structures, period." Azerbaijan exists in a volatile part of the world, "our neighbors are strengthening, we recognize the dangers." Mammadyarov said that Azerbaijan would continue its reforms in all spheres because "stability comes through reform...educational, economic, military." He said that Azerbaijan is "pretty satisfied" with its level of cooperation with NATO and NATO countries in this regard. Mammadyarov urged that the USG not underestimate the role of

the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, and other regional conflicts, for the region's development. He pointed out that stable development in Georgia is also key for US energy security interests.

#### Relations with US -- Equal Partnership, Missile Defense, Enhanced Security

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¶4. (C) Mammadyarov said Azerbaijan builds its global cooperation based on Azerbaijan's national interests and strongly supports greater cooperation with the US. But "we stand for equal partnership...cooperation is not a one-way street...we need face-to-face talks." The US could do more to bring predictability and stability to the region -- whether in terms of support on NK, or, for example, cooperation on the use of Qabala radar station. Dismissing the importance of both Russian and Iranian concerns on Qabala, Mammadyarov said that use of Qabala radar station as part of a broader network of missile defense could be a "very important element for predictability and stability...Azerbaijan supports ongoing talks on Qabala and its inclusion in the regional missile defense architecture."

¶5. (C) Fata said the USG appreciated Azerbaijan's offer of Qabala. He said that use of the station in the proposed missile defense system has not come up in the last four months' worth of talks with Russia on missile defense, however. Fata reviewed the progress in the 2-plus-2 talks and at Sochi for Mammadyarov, adding that the USG will continue to keep the GOAJ briefed on any discussion of Qabala. He noted that the missile defense system would eventually be composed of three components -- interceptors, a radar, and a forward-based radar.

¶6. (C) Mammadyarov said that the Iranians have expressed concerns about Qabala's inclusion in a missile defense system, but Azerbaijan has responded that Iran's acceptance of such an inclusion would help convince the world that Iran's nuclear program is peaceful. Mammadyarov noted, however, that its neighbors' concerns meant that "if we move forward with Qabala as part of the whole system, it will be a target. Azerbaijan would need to be protected from a military, political, and humanitarian point of view. That is very important for us because it would help us get under the umbrella."

#### Energy Security

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¶7. (C) More broadly, Mammadyarov said, Azerbaijan is sandwiched between Russia and Iran, and must maneuver between its two powerful neighbors. As Azerbaijan engages more with strategic energy projects, in particular, the GOAJ is thinking more about security. Azerbaijan continues to move forward on energy and is "open to all possibilities." Behind-the-scenes diplomacy with Turkmenistan is paying off, Mammadyarov said, noting that he is "optimistic that we can achieve" the transit of Central Asian gas to Europe. "That is our intention and our strategic choice." But he cautioned that the US "not forget our oriental nature as well."

¶8. (C) Although "some" urge Azerbaijan to expedite its efforts on energy security, "Azerbaijan is going in the right direction," Mammadyarov asserted. "We are doing and are ready to continue to do our job to open Central Asia to the rest of the world," serving as both a producer and a transit country. Azerbaijan's role on energy is a "key element of our domestic stability." Mammadyarov said the GOAJ is doing well in developing relations with Turkmenistan, predicting that within this year the two countries would be working even more closely together. He confirmed that President Berdimuhamedov would travel to Baku next month. Caspian delimitation talks are ongoing on the basis of the median line concept; given Azerbaijan's agreements with Russia and Kazakhstan, if agreement is reached with Turkmenistan, delimitation is "a done deal."

#### NATO, Security Umbrella

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¶9. (C) "Right now, we are out in the rain." Mammadyarov said that Azerbaijan was happy with the Bucharest language regarding NATO's views on Georgia and Ukraine, and said he told Saakashvili he "got more than expected." The Georgian population supports NATO membership, but the situation is more difficult in the Ukraine. Mammadyarov said it is very important that Azerbaijan expand its cooperation with NATO. To do so, "we need to do a lot of homework," especially educating the Azerbaijani population about NATO, and NATO member states about Azerbaijan. Azerbaijan needs to be more vocal in EU member state capitals and on the Hill. By the time Azerbaijan makes the decision to join, "the groundwork should be laid" for its acceptance, Mammadyarov said. He asked rhetorically whether the Armenian lobby would allow Azerbaijan to join NATO, permitting the relevant resolution in Congress would pass. "I have no feeling the US wants Azerbaijan in NATO," he added.

¶10. (C) Mammadyarov said that the GOAJ had thoroughly discussed the possibility of intensified dialogue. After the completion of IPAP II, "we can move smoothly to intensified dialogue," Mammadyarov said. Russian and Iran, he noted, are "fiercely opposed" to Azerbaijan taking this step, in part because of the recent tension over the Georgia and Ukraine bids. "We need to navigate our policy smoothly, and frankly speaking, we are looking for a security umbrella. Right now, there is not only no umbrella, we are out in the rain," Mammadyarov said. It is very important that Washington understand this, he said. Both Iran and the Armenian Diaspora, given NK, will "fiercely oppose" NATO membership for Azerbaijan. Fata replied that all steps up to actual membership are "self selection" by the country aspiring to join NATO. It is not the business of the Armenian lobby, Russia or Iran.

¶11. (C) Mammadyarov replied that the GOAJ has to deal with the "realities on the ground, here" and underscored again the importance of Azerbaijan "navigating smartly" to achieve its policy goals. He pointed out, for example, that even with the annual waiver of Section 907 of the FSA, "we can't bust parity." Fata argued that while 907 constrains some aspects of our security relations, much can be done even within this constraint. Mammadyarov highlighted Azerbaijan's important announcement of enhanced cooperation in Afghanistan at Bucharest, saying that with its new proposals, Azerbaijan is "the only non-member country using state partnership to move to civilian to civilian cooperation." Azerbaijan needs to do more, he acknowledged, to educate the American public about Azerbaijan and its contributions.  
TEP  
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¶12. (C) Fata told Mammadyarov that the US and Azerbaijan are at a point in their relations at which "we can move beyond a 12-month framework to three to five years." Mammadyarov welcomed the delegation's proposals for expanding from military-to-military to broader civilian-to-civilian cooperation under the Oklahoma State Partnership program. With respect to a possible train-and-equip program (TEP), Mammadyarov said that "if the USG is seriously interested in a TEP, but without some of the unnecessary conditions, we can move ahead. Let's sit down and work out the details -- TEP is very important for reforming our military."

COMMENT  
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¶13. (C) In their substantive and positive exchange (the neuralgic issue of NK was barely raised), Mammadyarov reiterated President Aliyev's message to DAS/D Fata (reftel): support for US policy on a regional missile defense architecture, including use of Qabala, support for US policy to bring Caspian and Central Asian energy west to bolster global energy security, Azerbaijan's continued commitment to reform and integration into Euro-Atlantic structures, including NATO, as its policy goal. Mammadyarov also made it

clear that given increasing dangers in the region from "strengthening neighbors" who oppose Azerbaijan's policy choices, Azerbaijan seeks a closer security relationship with the US, "under the umbrella and out of the rain." We believe that to maintain and deepen Azerbaijan's support for important US objectives in an strategic region facing growing tension and uncertainty, we should carefully examine how we can respond. Septel will provide ideas reviewed with DAS/D Fata for Washington agencies' consideration. END COMMENT.

¶14. DAS/D Fata has reviewed and cleared this cable.  
DERSE